

Syracu se in Print

April 5, 2017

Mr. John Katko, Representative of the 24th District of New York
1620 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Katko,

As two local humanities scholars who currently study, live, and work in 24th District of New York, we are writing to encourage you to continue to support federal funding for public arts programming, including the NEH, NEA, and CPB. As we understand it, the president's preliminary federal budget proposes to eliminate funding for these essential and longstanding resources. This is perplexing to residents like us who have not only personally and intellectually flourished because of such funding, but have invested it to produce quality community programming for a variety of citizens in Onondaga County through a project called Syracuse In Print. As such, we are writing to both explain how this money has affected small projects like ours and, as such, request that you to work with members of the House to draft a more responsible, publicly-accountable budget in the coming weeks.

Syracuse in Print started in 2013 as a way to encourage local citizens to produce and self-publish their writing using everyday materials. Our approach was two-fold — to teach aspiring writers how to design and make their own publications and to provide a forum for those publications to be shared publicly at an annual print festival. While we haven't been able to coordinate a festival just yet, we have run several successful workshops for local artists, librarians, and patrons of our public libraries. At a recent open workshop at Central Library's new MakerSpace, for example, we helped a diverse group of more than 25 design, bind, and photocopy their work for others to read. Advance coverage of the event was printed in the Sunday edition of the *Post-Standard* and 12th District Onondaga County Legislature Member, David Knapp (R), was reportedly impressed with the activity as he was visiting the location that afternoon.

Syracuse In Print would likely never have happened if it weren't indirectly supported by grants awarded by the NEH. From 2014-2015, during Jason's fourth year in a PhD program at Syracuse University, he received a \$5,000 fellowship from the New York Council for the Humanities (now called Humanities New York) to carry out plans for this public program. As Director Sara Ogger has noted, most of Humanities New York's grant revenue comes directly from the NEH. This funding provided Jason with training in grant writing and budget administration, access to a number of arts and culture experts from all over the State of New York, and the release time necessary to research and develop programming that Syracuse In Print has been offering since 2014.

Less than \$300 million is needed annually for both the NEH and NEA, a mere fraction of the \$1.1 trillion of the total budget for annual discretionary spending. Such a percentage would not even be visible on a pie chart. In 2016, NEH grant funding amounted to less than \$1 per person in New York State. At the same time, those who work in the public arts and humanities know how to stretch a dollar. And although Syracuse In Print was initially funded by this grant, we have

continued to pour several volunteer hours into this project each semester, drawing from nothing but our own resources and those within the City of Syracuse. For these reasons, we hope you will join other representatives such as Mark Amodei (R-Nevada) and Ken Calvert (R-California) in supporting the continued funding of programs like the NEH, NEA, and CPB. To learn more about Syracuse In Print you can visit syracuseinprint.com. We look forward to hearing you on this matter in the near future.

Sincerely,

Jason Luther & Patrick Williams
Syracuse In Print